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Media Linguistics: On Mediality and Culturality

(Opener)

Martin Luginbühl

This article draws on recent developments within media linguistics, both regarding the changing objects of research as well as crucial theoretical questions. Regarding the objects, an expansion can be observed, overcoming the long-lasting limitation to journalistic mass media. This change is above all due to changes that came along with digital media communication permeating our everyday lives, but also blurring the lines between one-to-one and one-to-many communication. These far-reaching changes also led to an intensified discussion of central concepts like medium and mediality. As current tendencies within the field, multimodality, culturality, and the triad of production – product – reception are discussed.

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What is Media Linguistics?

If the number of published essays, anthologies and introductory books are taken into account, media linguistics can be considered as one of the most dynamic fields of applied linguistics in the German-speaking area (which this article will focus on). This can be explained by the fact that the subject of analysis of media linguistics has evolved in various ways with the emergence of digital media – which can hardly be described as "new media" any longer in the second decade of the 21st century. This expansion has also led to an intensified discussion on some of the fundamental concepts. In what follows, I will address both of these aspects. Finally, I will highlight some central tendencies and desiderata in present-day media linguistics.

What does Media Linguistics Study?

A recent introduction on media linguistics written by Ulrich Schmitz opens as follows: "Media linguistics studies how language is used in the media" (Schmitz 2015: 7, my translation). According to this quote, the focal point of media linguistics, similar to conversation analysis and sociolinguistics, lies in the *use* of language in actual communicative situations.

The specific focus of media linguistics lies in the consideration of a medium-specific processing of signs and their semiotic materialities, as well as associated institutions or non-institutionalised social groups, their discursive and cultural practices by means of and within these media, with a strong focus on the use of linguistic signs.

This implies an emphasis on the micro level of media texts. However, as language use always takes place in a situational and wider cultural context, media linguistic analysis should also reflect on aspects of the meso and the macro levels. This includes questions on intertextual relations or questions on cultural practices of social groups.

The object of media linguistic analysis essentially depends on the concept of the *medium*. In early media linguistic "milestone publications" (Stöckl 2012: 16, my translation) on "Language of the Press" ["Pressesprache"] (Lüger 1983), "Communication of the Press" ["Pressekommunikation"] (Bucher 1986), as well as "Language of the Mass Media" ["Sprache der Massenmedien"] (Burger 1984), things used to be relatively clear: the objects of analysis were mass-media texts,

i.e. texts from newspapers, from radio and from television. Authors of the texts investigated were mostly professional writers who produced texts collaboratively in an institutionalised context. Such texts were produced (i.e. printing press), duplicated, and received (i.e. television) by technical means. They were made publicly available in the form of one-way communication to a vast number of people. The audience remained anonymous.

Traditional mass media texts can be distinguished from other texts by a certain periodicity and in general a short "validity period" ["Gültigkeitsdauer"] (Adamzik 2004: 78). Prototypically, they appear on a daily basis and are meant for a short-term use (see Burger & Luginbühl 2014: 1f. on these properties); many introductory books have not taken advertising into account (but see Schmitz 2015). Journalistic mass media are the object of research of 'traditional' media linguistics, with a pronounced focus on the analysis of products rather than processes. Linguistic studies on the production and *reception* of texts used to be rare; analyses of non-journalistic mass media (i.e. books or movies on DVD) are scarcely found in these media linguistic works and have not yet been in the centre of interest of media linguistics (but see e.g., Bednarek 2010; Queen 2015). Even though the scope of the field of traditional media linguistics is wide, its delimitations are clear-cut.

This has changed with the emergence of digital communication technologies in the mid-1990s. On the one hand, the new communicative practices that could be observed in the context of these technologies have generally increased our sensitivity to the mediality of communication. On the other hand, they have also blurred the lines between individual and mass communication when for instance both are likely to happen on the same electronic platform or when there are many different intermediate forms between one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many communication. Furthermore, recent studies on the production and – even though still rare – on the reception have been conducted.

Along with this new sensibility for mediality effects, reflections on the concept of the *medium* itself have gained momentum. The emergence and appropriation of new technologies has, for instance, led to the possibility of reading newspapers in various ways: in print, online, on mobile phones, as well as with special apps for tablets, smartphones, or smartwatches. These differentiation processes prompt the question of what differences there are between various versions and how they relate to mediality. Schwarzl (2015) and Burger & Luginbühl (2014: 487-499) show that content and form in such and similar cases are not the same. When it comes to newspapers, for instance, there are substantial differences in the versions mentioned regarding the production, the product itself and its reception. Nowadays, the print version is usually published once a day, the place for the written text is limited by the number of pages, only static pictures can be used, reactions to the texts are only possible in the form of letters to the editor, and readers are only rarely invited to participate in text message or online surveys.

In these respects, online newspapers differ greatly from their print versions: Typically, they are updated continuously; not only written texts or static pictures but also videos, interactive infographics etc. can be integrated. Also, the opportunity to react to the news text is important: for instance by writing a comment, clicking on "like"-buttons, and sharing content onto social media platforms, etc. But already the very act of reading an online article has an impact on

the list of articles that are most frequently viewed.

In addition, the individual texts of these two newspaper versions are not simply 'the same': even though large parts of the wording in the printed and online version may be similar or almost identical, they are characterised by different segmentations and contextualisations. So called 'Anreißertexte', a special form of extended headline including the beginning of an article, for example, are typical of online newspapers but not in their printed counterparts. Due to the textual structure and mediality of online newspapers, these texts are actually needed in order not only to find the corresponding article, but to know about its very existence. In addition, it has to be noticed that sign modes (language, picture, sound) are combined differently in online versions and that online texts show intra- and intermedial connections that distinguish them from print newspaper texts. This happens for instance through links, reader's comments and reader ratings, etc. The reception contexts are also quite different depending on the mediality of newspapers.

Already at this point, the question arises of what constitutes the *medium*. Is it the 'newspaper' as institution that publishes different versions? Or can we assume that there are five distinct media because of the five different versions of a newspaper, i.e. its print, online, mobile, tablet, and smartphone versions? If a technical understanding of the medium is adopted, the networked computer would be the medium of the online newspaper. This medium, however, would not only include online newspapers but also various other genres, such as e-mail, chat, blog, twitter, and social media platforms. Besides the digitalisation of the data only few shared characteristics can be found. This is why a purely technical conceptualization of the medium does not seem to be expedient in media linguistics in times of technical convergence (and generic diversification, with text messages, for instance, being written on a desktop computer or on a smartphone etc.): a purely technical notion of the medium is hardly able to account for the basic communicative features of the individual genres.

The increasing attention for the emergence of new genres as well as the greater awareness for the aspect of form (i.e. regarding text design or typography, see Antos & Spitzmüller 2007; Hagemann 2007; Spitzmüller 2013) became apparent in the context of works on digital, written and visual communication beyond simple one-way-communication. This can either encompass one-to-one communication (prototypically e-mail or text messages, see the early works of Günther & Wyss 1996; Baron 1998, 2000; Androutsopoulos & Schmidt 2002; Döring 2002a & b; Elspaß 2002; Ziegler & Dürscheid 2002; Thurlow 2003) or many-to-many communication (prototypically chat, mailing lists, see Werry 1996; Hentschel 1998; Grosch 1999; Herring 1999; Paolillo 1999; Schmidt 2000; Beißwenger 2001; Rintel et al. 2001; Durham 2003). In these cases, innovative language and character (in the case of smileys etc.) uses were soon detected – compared to the first online newspapers that used to be "text databases for printed newspapers" (Bucher 1998: 100, my translation).

This development implies an enormous expansion of the field of media linguistics that nowadays does not exclusively deal with *journalistic* mass media anymore. But if interpersonal communication – because "it can be realised in a variety of different media" (Schmitz 2015: 12, my translation) – becomes the subject of media linguistic analysis then every kind of communicative exchange lends itself to media linguistic de-

scription.[1] Consequently, it seems less important to ask about the *subject* (in terms of the analysed object) of media linguistics, but it rather is the specific *perspective* taken on that subject that becomes relevant.

In the beginning of CMC studies in the late 1990s (Androutsopoulos 2006: 420 speaks of a "first wave of linguistic CMC studies"), new forms of language use were described in a more or less decontextualised way and were often labelled as "netspeak" (Crystal 2006) as the result of rather imprecise generalisations. Today's studies reflect on different sub-genres (e.g. corporate blogs, academic blogs, personal blogs and so on, see Puschmann 2010; Fritz 2013: ch. 11; Schildhauer 2014), diverse situational and cultural contexts (see, e.g., Kerschner in this issue; Ylönen 2007; DeAndrea et al. 2010; Luginbühl & Hauser 2010; Luginbühl 2014 a & b; Theodoropoulou 2015) and contextualisations (see, e.g., van Dijck 2013; Bastian et al. 2014; Locher et al. 2015; Klemm & Michel in this issue, Pflaeging in this issue). This shows, in my opinion, that a purely technical conceptualisation of mediality alone, i.e. an understanding of medium as technical apparatus, does not meet the requirements of media linguistic description of contemporary communication.

What is a Medium?

As mentioned above, the question now arises of what constitutes the medium when analysing media texts: Is it the technical apparatus that gives material shape to the transmitted signs (e.g., a printing press or a TV camera)? Is it the sign carrier (e.g., a printed newspaper) or the receiver device (e.g., a TV set)? Or do we refer to an institution when talking about the newspaper or television – and therefore to a social group producing the texts with certain routines, within a certain society and for a certain media market? The research questions that need to be formulated depend greatly on how we answer these questions.

A lot of media linguistic studies define the medium as technical device (e.g., definitions given in Schmitz 2015: 8 or in Marx & Weidacher 2014: 84), extending this definition though by introducing additional aspects. In these works, the core meaning of medium is that of a technical device, serving the production, transmission and/or storage of signs. Such conceptualisations of the medium focus on the aspect of sign transmission; media communication is in this case every kind of communication that makes use of technical devices (in a rather broad sense, including e.g., paper as transmission medium). Consequently, face-to-face communication needs to be classified as non-medial and somehow direct communication. Based on this conceptualisation of the medium and the media under analysis, the question arises of what modes (like language, image, sound see Kress & van Leeuwen 2006) can be realised in what kinds of material shape, in what local and temporal relations the transmission takes place (e.g. simultaneous or delayed transmission), as well as the question of whether the medium allows, for instance, one-way-communication only (see Holly 2011). This conceptualisation seems valuable at first since it is quite homogenous compared to much broader conceptualisations that can be found in media philosophy or media sociology (which include e.g. money, shoes or power as media, see Krotz 2012: 34; Klemm & Michel 2013). Understanding media as technical devices also draws attention to the crucial fact that technical devices always enable (or prevent) realisations of

[1] Except oral face-to-face communication if a technical understanding of the concept medium is adopted, see below.

certain modes, and thus have an influence on the repertoire of genres that can be realised in a certain medium (see Habscheid 2000).

Studies relying on a technical conceptualisation of the medium distinguish another analytical level next to medium and genre in order to discern different communicative constellations *within* a technical medium. These works distinguish between 'medium' – 'communication form' – 'text type' (Stöckl 2012: 19 uses "Kommunikat" instead of 'text type'; Holly 1997; Schmitz 2015: 8-11). These communication forms encompass aspects of the technical medium on the one hand (e.g., the communication form 'TV show' is described as "non-permanent" "one-way-communication", see Schmitz 2015: 9, my translations), and specifics of the communicative situation (Schmitz 2015: 8) on the other hand (e.g., the TV show can be current or not, it can make use of written language or not). Holly places the notion communication form right in between technical possibilities and a communicative-pragmatic design, describing it as "media-based cultural practices" (Holly 2011: 155, my translation).

Examples of communication forms would be e-mail communication (with text types such as business e-mail or private e-mail), chat communication (with e.g. expert chats, dating chats) etc. Both communication forms are realised by means of a computer (although thereby neglecting differences between desktop computers, smartphones and tablets), but they do differ with respect to communicative constellations (e.g. regarding simultaneity, one-way or two-way communication etc.). The ways of sign processing in e-mails or chat, respectively, are different regarding communicative structures to such a degree that they cannot be grasped with a technical conceptualisation of the medium and this is where the intermediate concept of communication form comes in. These differences between communicative structures become very clear in the age of convergent media: A smartphone can be used to make phone calls or to send voice messages, to write e-mails or text messages etc. Very different communication forms can be realised with one technical device. This situation was different in the age of analogue media as the communication forms of the traditional mass media (newspaper, radio, TV) used different technical devices for transmission.

The concept of communication form allows discerning specific communicative constellations with regards to different ways of sign processing that emerge when using technical devices (which is a cultural process, not something that is due to the apparatus). Nevertheless, the concept is problematic in some ways as Schneider (i.pr.) points out. It separates the material aspect of communication i.e. the modes used from the procedural side, i.e. the communicative practices. This way, the medium (understood as technical device) is reduced to the repertoires and combinations of semiotic modes and their transmission; aspects of sign processing are related to communication forms and text types alone.

Thus, this conceptualisation has some major disadvantages. It is not the case – which has already been acknowledged in works on traditional communication models – that technical transmission media simply transmit signs in a neutral way and that they only determine the modes that can be used (e.g. sound in the case of radio) and aspects of communicative structure (like one-way-communication). Rather it is the case that there are very complex relations between different medialities (including oral and written communication, which are in the case of TV intertwined anyway) and therefore also between different media (in the sense of technical devices) on the one hand and communicative practices on the other hand.

Technical transmission devices (or, more generally, the mediality chosen) have an impact on the way we use language, they take part in the constitution of sign processing. Media therefore co-create and not merely transmit meaning (sensu Krämer 1998: 74: ["sinnmiterzeugende und nicht bloß eine sinntransportierende Kraft"]). They leave an "unintended trace" of meaning in processes of meaning-making (Krämer 1998: 73, my translation), because every medium favours and demands a specific processing of communication. As a consequence of the technical framework, people communicating in online-chats, for instance, are not able to interrupt each other; they cannot prevent others from taking part in communication by producing long utterances and they cannot signal on the level of nonverbal communication whether they agree with someone else's utterance. This is due to the specific mediality of chat communication that is characterised by another kind of interactivity, of sign processing and multimodality compared to oral communication in face-to-face conversation. The mediality of chat also influences the design of communicative practices. Thus, in chat communication, instead of interrupting, continuity markers are ignored (Storrer 2001: 16); instead of long continuous utterances, lots of short utterances are realised (so called "chunks", see Spitzmüller 2005: 12; Beißwenger 2007: 246-253 speaks of "splitting") in order to cover much of the space; and smileys are used in order to communicate moods and attitudes, e.g. to mark an utterance as ironic.

All these examples show that the influence of a medium (in the example above: the chat-specific processing of writing) goes way beyond modal choices (e.g., written language). Thus, media play their part in shaping utterances from the very beginning, they not only determine *which* signs we use but they also have an influence on *how* we use them.[2] In short: Media offer a frame that, in the process of utterance production already, has an influence on *how* we design the utterance, *how* we process signs (see Habscheid 2000: 137; see also the "medium factors" discussed in Herring 2007; Schneider i. pr.).

This is, however, also true for oral communication. Face-to-face conversation is anything but a neutral, non-medial form of communication. Like any other communicative event, it is shaped by the specific materialisation and processing of the respective signs. And it is for that reason that a technical conceptualisation of media remains problematic.

At the same time technical transmission media do not completely determine language use: to a certain extent we always have the possibility to choose – and it is this aspect of choice that allows realising cultural positionings through diverse and constantly changing communicative practices (see Linke 2011; Luginbühl 2014a & b). If, for example, journalistic texts are compared, different designs of the role of journalists can be identified (e.g., supposedly neutral disseminators of information vs. disseminators of values; detached reporters vs. entertainers). Usually almost all semiotic modes are involved in the realisation of these roles – for instance in the case of television the chosen formulations are involved as well as the staging of the journalists in the footage (i.e. correspondents that are 'live on the spot', even though they are actually standing in front of a green screen) or the prosodic design of speech (see Luginbühl 2011). Or, to give another example, there are (still) bloggers who refrain from posting pictures, although the medium

[2] Smileys are a case in point: They do not just replace non-verbal communication, as we are *forced* in face-to-face conversation to *always* behave nonverbally, while we can use smileys very selectively in chat communication. We cannot use them simultaneous to verbal communication though but only sequentialised, i.e. before, in the middle or after a verbal utterance (see also Hinz in this issue).

would allow to do so (see Schildhauer 2014: 318).

Due to these communicative potentials that media always create, they show a cultural "fitting" ["Zurichtung"] (Linke 2008: 118) that results from respective media uses that at the same time influences them. For instance, quite fundamental uses of technical transmission resources can be subject to this cultural fitting (e.g., telephones were originally also used for the transmission of concerts and therefore for one-way communication, see Holly 1997: 74; text messages were initially only intended for the communication between operators and customers, see Androutsopoulos & Schmidt 2002: 2; Krotz 2012: 46). But this cultural fitting especially affects the individual genres that are functionalised through stylistic variation in the use of signs. We, for instance, notice differences in articles in tabloid newspapers in comparison to articles in subscription newspapers. Another example would be a private as opposed to public use of new digital genres. This cultural fitting can also lead to changes in the technical transmission device. In the case of Twitter for example, a twitterer made a suggestion that led to the implementation of the hashtag function (#; see Moraldo 2009: 206). This allows labelling keywords (e.g., the hashtag #schlandkette, a clipping of 'Deutschlandkette', a necklace in the colours of the German flag that was worn by German chancellor Angela Merkel during the television debate 2013). Technology initially offers a potential – crucial for communication is always the users' behaviour. Technical means are no media, but they have been transformed into media through communicative action (Krotz 2012: 35, 45).

In sum, it can be pointed out that the concept of the medium has various *interconnected* aspects that are relevant for media linguistics. First, there is the technical aspect that concerns the production, the transmission and the reception of signs. The second aspect is semiotic in nature and relates to the choice, combination and processing of different modes such as language, image or sound. Finally, there is the pragmatic aspect, which focuses on the cultural practices based on changing communicative needs of an institution or of other social groups, including different practices regarding production and reception. These practices lead to the fitting of technical media and even up to their modification. As the media influence the way we use signs as well as our cultural practices influence the way we use media, it is the notions of mediality and culturality that mark elementary formative forces in communication. These medially conditioned cultural practices can also be referred to as 'dispositives' according to Holly (2011) and Jäger (2010), which "gradually developed and modified on the basis of available technical possibilities and social requirements" (Holly 2011: 155, my translation).[3]

Generally speaking, we can assume that communicative needs influence the development and especially the large-scale implementation of technical media and vice versa allow the development of new media techniques, new cultural production patterns as well as new reception patterns. As the relation between media technology, mode and design as well as cultural practice is accordingly complex and interdependent (see Holly 2011: 155), the relation between production, product and reception is not modelled as a simple cycle anymore, but as network with a multitude of flows, resulting in complex communicative connectivities (see Hepp 2006). This is even more necessary as new media such as tablets, smartphones and smartwatches result in the media increasingly permeating our lives, in

[3] Elsewhere Holly also links mediality to oral communication (Holly 2011: 149f.).

which we easily switch between writing and reading, between producing and receiving. Furthermore the web 2.0 gives us the possibility to make our text publicly available in a very easy way. A related concept is mediatization, which tries to describe the complex relations between the media, communication and society (see Androutsopoulos 2014; Hepp 2014; Lundby 2014; Strömbäck & Esser 2014).

If we consider the three aspects of production, product and reception in a multidimensional media linguistic understanding of the term medium, we can conceptualise media according to Schneider (2008, i. pr.) as specific "socially-constituted procedures" (my translation) of sign processing. According to this theory, a medium is a way and manner of communication processing that encompasses the production, distribution and reception, it takes part in the transmission *and* constitution of sign processing. This concept of media can, depending on the research interest, be understood as rather wide (spoken language, Internet, see Marx & Weidacher 2014: 71-90) or narrow (mobile phone calls).

If one accepts this view of medium, then there is no non-medial communication because communication is always dependent on perception and therefore also on a perceptible materialisation: "all forms of human interaction are mediated in one way or another" (Livingstone & Lunt 2014: 717). Thus, every linguistic expression, either spoken or written, is materialised and mediated, because it somehow has to be processed through the choice of materialisation. Furthermore, it has to be noticed that communication cannot take place without materialisation. Media linguitics, then, defines itself through a specific perspective, namely on media as a force co-creating meaning and on cultural linguistic practices. These can be understood as processes of sign use, which are processurally, semiotically and pragmaculturally characterised as well as characterising. However it can be mentioned that media linguistics for a long time restricted itself to journalistic mass media and on interpersonal communication, in which technical tools are employed.

Face-to-face communication as the original form of communication shows important differences to communication that uses technical tools. In face-to-face communication, neither a third party as for instance distributors/sales partners or operators (interpreters are an exception here), nor any device, which would temporarily and spatially expand communication, are involved (in terms of "extension", see Schulz 2004: 88). Thus, the limitations of the media linguistic subjects of investigation can be described based on the use of technical tools. This can be done, however, without having to put these tools on the same level as media.

Current Tendencies

For a long time, media linguistics has focused on the use of language in journalistic products. Current media linguistic tendencies expand this focus in different directions. I would like to single out three of these directions: the expansion on non-linguistic or paralinguistic signs (multimodality), the expansion of a cultural dimension (culturality) and the expansion on the whole communicative process (including the production and reception). The current media linguistic expansion on interpersonal communication in digital media has previously been mentioned. Due to lack of space, a few references to current publications will have to suffice: Thurlow & Mroczek (2011), Siever & Schlobinski (2012), Herring et al. (2013), Bedjis et al. (2014), Marx & Weidacher (2014), Schildhauer (2014), Locher et al. (2015), Tagg (2015); see also Pflaeging, Kerschensteiner in this issue.

Multimodality

Media linguistic analyses have considered images next to verbal text for a long time, especially in the cases of television (see Ballstaedt 1976; Muckenhaupt 1986), or advertisement (see Schöberle 1984; Stöckl 1997). However, when it comes to television texts, the relation between language and images has almost always been approached from a logocentric perspective (see Holly 2005).

Since the end of the 20th century, however, non-linguistic and para-linguistic signs have been taken into account to an increasing extent. Such innovative perspectives on media texts were prompted by visible innovations in their design, especially the growing importance of images in online and print newspapers (see for instance Bucher 1995 on text design in press reports or Schmitz 2001 on online newspapers). The concept of *multimodality* that has been developed within the field of "social semiotics" (van Leeuwen 2005; Kress & van Leeuwen 2006; see also Ruiz 2013) is particularly productive in media linguistics.

Nowadays, there are not only fundamental works on the multimodality of media texts (such as Straßner 2002; Stöckl 2004; Jewitt 2014; Zantides 2014), but also a broad range of individual analyses (see contributions in anthologies Fix & Wellmann 2000; Eckkrammer & Held 2006; Spitzmüller & Roth 2007; Deppermann & Linke 2010; Dieckmannshenke et al. 2011; Schneider & Stöckl 2011; see Kilchör, Domke, Siefkes, and Pflaeging in this volume). This importance of a multimodal analysis of media texts derives from the meaning potentials that are generated through the integration of different semiotic modes (e.g., language, image and sound) as well as through their interaction. What is relevant here is that modes can be materialised in various ways (for instance as spoken or written language, a photograph or a painting, music or noises etc.) and that text designs can also be arranged differently. Thus, compared to previous media linguistic studies multimodal analyses focus less on language alone but they usually shift their focus to media *semiotic* studies. Accordingly, we could ask if we should still use the notion of media texts – or rather limit the notion of text to linguistic instances. Adamzik (2004: 43) suggests the notion of "Kommunikat" as an alternative for multimodal complexes.

However, if we acknowledge the fact that language is always dependent on materialisation, then 'pure language' cannot exist (see Holly 2011, 2013). Therefore, aspects such as typography or colouring and potentially also lines, bars, colour patches etc. also play an important role as far as verbal texts are concerned. Texts as interwoven products are never purely verbal. So if a semiotic notion of text is taken into consideration, individual modes still have to be analysed by means of specific analytical grids. Even in "pictorial linguistics" ["Bildlinguistik"] the fact that semiotically images function differently than language is uncontested. This results in the claim that individual modes first have to be analytically separated and then scrutinised according to a mode-specific analytical framework – without neglecting the fact that meaning is realised through the combination of all modes involved (see, e.g., Bateman 2014).

Culturality

Over the past years a "culture-linguistic" paradigm, based on studies of contrastive textology (Eckkrammer et al. 1999; Pöckl 1999; Adamzik 2001; Fix et al. 2001; Lüger &

Lenk 2008; Hauser & Luginbühl 2012) and on the pragmatic history of language (Sitta 1980; Linke 1996; Cherubim 1998), developed in media linguistics (see, e.g., Tienken 2008; Klemm & Michel 2014; Luginbühl 2014 a & b). This paradigm also refers to sociolinguistic and ethnographic studies (see Günthner & Linke 2006; Senft 2006). "Culture-linguistics" assumes that common values and norms from (small or large) groups have to be negotiated, established, passed on and changed during semiotically based interactions (see Klemm & Michel in this issue). They actually have to be negotiated in this context because human beings only have access to the world through the use and the mediation of symbolic forms (see Cassirer 2001-2002 [1923-1924]). Humans are "symbolically mediated beings" (Krotz 2012: 39, my translation) which constitute themselves through communication (see Krotz 2012: 39-44).

Consequently, this means that the semiotic and linguistic conception of the world always also to certain extents constitutes this world. Culture is dependent on communication and "all communication always relies on culture and is contextualized by culture" (Krotz 2012: 39, my translation). A cultural approach to media texts opens up a perspective in which the way and manner of language use, and thereby the linguistic form, becomes especially relevant.

Whenever people solve communicative tasks (e.g., reporting in a newspaper or acting as a funny person in a Facebook-update), they always have the choice between various forms. And it is the possible variation of communicative forms within the same task that adds a cultural value to the single forms, in other words a surplus of semiotic meaning potential (see Linke 2003: 42). They can actually be used for social purposes of self-presentation, integration or distinction. This phenomenon is central for digital communication on social platforms, where identity negotiations take place exclusively (or at least primarily) in a verbal way. Within the field of journalistic mass media, different *forms* of news coverage establish different journalistic cultures (Hanitzsch 2007; Hepp et al. 2010; Brüggemann 2011; Hanitzsch et al. 2011; Hanitzsch & Donsbach 2012). This culture has different values and norms – as for instance a focus on citizens or on consumers. Thus culture-linguistics allows relating the stylistic analysis of linguistic forms to a macro-level of cultural values and norms. Thereby, the linguistic form turns out to be constitutive of certain aspects of cultural negotiation processes. Particularly relevant in this perspective are genres, which can be understood as established patterns of cultural practices (as e.g. editorials, see Kerschner in this issue; or viral online genres, see Pflaeging in this issue).

This approach does not follow the content vs. form dichotomy. Instead, it understands form as implying meaning, thereby creating links to conceptions of "style" put forward by Sandig (2006) or Devitt (2009). In contrast to classic antiquity where style was seen as ornamental guise that should be added at the end of the production process, these approaches conceive of style holistically as a "socially meaningful way of performing an action" (Sandig 2006: 17). In this concept, form and content combine to create a specific *gestalt* that generates meanings which are more than the sum of its parts. This renders such conception of style particularly useful for analyses of multimodal communication. With regards to media linguistics, this approach enables us to interpret linguistic forms in terms of culture and to account for journalistic and group-related cultures. In such an interpretive process, the central status of media technology needs to be taken into account, as it contributes substantially to the shape and development of

culture and thereby influences our action as well as our attitudes – even beyond specific topics.

Methodologically, such an approach fundamentally relies on comparison, as the meaning of any specific form will only become apparent by comparing patterns and their variations. With regards to methods, media linguistic studies of culture can therefore benefit from recent developments both in text linguistics and genre studies (e.g. Scollon 2000; Drescher 2002; Yakhontova 2006; Berkenkotter 2008; Devitt 2009; Hauser 2010; Luginbühl 2014 a & b; see also Klemm & Michel in this volume), which conceive of culture not so much in homogenous, static terms (implicitly) related to a national language, but as dynamic semiotic practices used by social groups of varying size (such as the editorial staff of TV shows or a girls' clique, see Voigt 2015). Besides synchronic comparisons, diachronic studies of specific media texts can be conducted, as they would be especially well-suited to relate cultural change to language change.

Production – Product - Reception

A third development concerns the expansion of media linguistic investigations to cover the whole communicative process of production – product – reception. At the beginning, media linguistic studies concentrated on analysing the product as the central element of cultural meaning production.[4] Based on a complex notion of media that does not reduce media to tools of technological transfer, however, processes of production and reception have to be taken into account as well. The analysis of production processes allows for insights into specific aspects of the communicative context and the way in which these aspects are regarded as relevant e.g. by journalists and thereby shape the production of text. Related to mass media, these contextual aspects concern the wider context of the media market, policies impacting the media, the audience targeted, the technological equipment, guidelines and processes of the editorial staff as well as negotiations concerning the structure of any specific text in the case of collaborative writing.

[4] The product is object of production and reception and as such combines both aspects, see Lünenborg 2005: 69-71.

Concerning text production, media linguistic studies used to be limited to interviews with journalists that did not cover specific cases (e.g. Straßner 1982). In this regard, research has developed rapidly in recent years (for overviews refer to Cotter 2010; Catenaccio et al. 2011; Perrin 2013). Studies have not only scrutinised journalistic methods of investigation (Voßkamp 2010) and editorial meetings (Zampa 2015), but also for collaborative text production, e.g. by editors (Perrin 2011), as well as for individual journalists' text production (using progression analysis, see Perrin & Ehrensberger 2008, and subsequent case specific verbatim protocols, see Gnach 2011). However, studies on the production of media texts as part of a daily routine in journalistic practices and in our everyday lives remain a desideratum.

Just as investigations of production, reception studies have long been a subject of media science. Works in the field of cultural studies demonstrated early that recipients read media texts in ways that can contradict the intended readings of the authors (Fiske 1987: 62-83). A large media linguistic research project in Germany (Holly et al. 2001) analysed the communication among TV viewers and was able to show in great detail in which ways viewers appropriate media

texts (see also Klemm & Michel in this issue). It showed in particular that viewers establish links between media texts and their own experience. Bucher (2010, 2011) or Schumacher (2009) analyse the reception of multimodal texts (e.g. print and online newspapers, ads) by means of eye-tracking studies. They have shown that recipients solve certain problems of reception (like orienting or navigating) in certain phases. Furthermore, analyses indicate that the process of reception depends on text design but also on users' expectations and goals.

Here, the concept of affordances (Gibson 1979) comes into play (see Tienken 2014: 36f.). Affordances are an object's possibilities for action, whereas these possibilities have to be discovered in the use of this object. They are therefore understood as relational phenomena which are neither restricted to the object nor to the subject. With regards to media texts in web 2.0, this idea is of particular importance: Often times, texts are produced here that can be related to established genres. However, specific uses of new technological possibilities lead to modifications of established patterns (see also Schildhauer 2014: 92 & forthc. who captures these processes under the term *genre migration*). Thus, Tienken (2014), studying medical communication on the web, is able to show how media affordances facilitate the hybridization of lay as well as experts' perspectives with regards to medicine. This, in turn, leads to modifications of "claims of knowledge, depictions of reality and action orientations" (Tienken 2014: 31, my translation). Such studies allow us to analyse the appropriation of media through usage. On the basis of the texts, it is also possible to investigate the way these texts are fitted in terms of cultural practices.

Interpreting these observations against the background of a rapidly changing "matrix of media" (Finnemann 2014: 299) in Western societies, a new and in my view highly relevant field of media linguistics emerges. In this field, the complex usages of digital media by individuals and groups in everyday life are studied (see e.g. Voigt 2015). Jansson (2014: 276) talks about "transmedia textures". Comparable concepts are "communicative figuration" (Hepp & Hasebrink 2013) and "amalgamation" (Schulz 2004: 89). Within the framework of mediatization, media linguistic studies are able to investigate changes in the use of media. Since the discipline of media linguistics provides excellent methods and broad knowledge about how communication in the media works – and how it can be exploited –, it can and should contribute to this emerging paradigm. Thereby, media linguistics can add to our understanding of how digital media and the industries in its background change our ways of communication, how they influence social representation and, thereby, address questions of power and resistance, impacting our everyday life, our societies and identities.

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